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# Factors Influencing Juveniles' Perception of the Police in Karachi, Pakistan

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## ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to explore the role of juveniles' personal observation and their poverty status in influencing their perception of the police. The article draws on detailed informal interviews with 34 male juveniles on probation in Karachi. This study found that besides family members, friends and the media, juveniles' personal observation of the police's negative activities in their neighbourhood and vicinities was the leading factor influencing their perception of the police. All 34 juveniles have seen the police engaging in negative activities (being involved in crime) in their vicinity. In addition, the juveniles' poor socioeconomic status was found to be an important factor in shaping their negative perception although it was not as significant as the police's practice of criminalising the poor. It was also found that the majority of the juveniles were tortured; these juveniles claimed that they were innocent and were falsely implicated in false cases by the police.

These vicarious encounters reinvigorated their pre-established negative perception of the police. The article concludes that personal observation plays a major role in shaping juveniles' perception of the police in Karachi.

*Keywords:* Criminalisation of poor, juvenile justice, perception of police, socialisation, violence, Pakistan

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## INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan, there is no empirical evidence to show juveniles'<sup>1</sup> perception of the police, but there is evidence of the general public's perception of them. An ideal example would be a study by Akhtar, Rafiq, Asif and Saeed (2012) on the quality of services being provided by the police in the Punjab province of Pakistan. A total of 360 people were selected for the interview through a generic survey approach (Akhtar et al., 2012) but none of the interviewees was a juvenile or child. A similar type of survey was conducted by Jackson, Asif, Bradford and Zakar (2014) with 400 adults in Lahore, Pakistan, to investigate a link between four areas of personal experience of police corruption, their perception of the fairness and effectiveness of the police and their beliefs about the legitimacy of the police. However, some attempt in the field of juvenile justice has been made to understand different aspects of the connection between the law (theory) and actual practice, and this also includes details on the interaction between the police and juveniles (Iqbal,

2009; Sajid, 2009). However, they do not offer any information about the juveniles' perception of the police.

In many countries, much attention has been paid to the negative approach of the police in dealing with the public that has eroded the trust of young people in the police, making them less likely to turn to the police for help (Goodrich, Anderson, & LaMotte, 2014). Therefore, it is important to investigate juveniles' perception of the police. Knowledge and understanding of their perception of the police are important for practitioners, policy-makers and communities (Romain & Hassell, 2014; Flexon, Lurigio, & Greenleaf, 2009) as their perception "can influence the degree and type of interaction people have with the police and the degree of support provided to the police" (Khondaker, Lambert, & Wu, 2013).

The literature variously reports determinants of juveniles' perception of the police. Among the most significant determining factors are demographic characteristics (race, gender and age), crime-related variables (victimisation and perception of neighbourhood crime) and police conduct variables (personal and vicarious encounters) (Hurst, 2007). Geistman and Smith (2007) asserted that American youths' attitudes towards the police are inferences of an intricate set of personal characteristics, social environment and personal experience.

Juveniles who do not have direct interaction with the police may form perception of the police based on information

<sup>1</sup>According to Section 2 (c) of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice ("The Beijing Rules"), 1985, "A juvenile offender is a child or young person who is alleged to have committed or who has been found to have committed an offence" (OHCHR, 1985). In Section 2 (b) of the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance (2000) of Pakistan, a juvenile is a child who has not attained the age of eighteen years at the time of commission of an offence against which he or she is accused or alleged (Khoso, 2017).

from their friends, family and relatives who have had contact with the police. The theory of socialisation pays much attention on sources such as family, the neighbourhood, friends and media, stating that these sources have different levels of impact on the formation of juveniles' perception of the police, as most of the young boys and girls spend more time with their peers in the neighbourhood and schools than with their parents at homes (Brick, Taylor, & Esbensen, 2009; Janeksela, 1999). Additional research has suggested that the media, including music and song lyrics, offer an interesting source for further investigation in the field of socialisation of juveniles and the formation of their perception of the police (Shank, 1996; Bowler & Zawilski, 2007).

Demographic characteristics such as race, sex, gender and age have been considered the most influential in shaping juveniles' perception of the police (Brown & Benedict, 2007), and much attention is paid on the investigation of white and black juveniles (Nihart, Lersch, Sellers, & Mieczkowski, 2005; Geistman & Smith, 2007). The studies showed that vicarious (or maltreatment by the police) experience of juveniles with the police results in negative perception of juveniles of the police (Romain & Hassell, 2014; Flexon et al., 2009; Hurst, McDermott, & Thomas, 2005). If they have had bad experiences with the police in the past, juveniles are expected to form a negative attitude towards the police (Hurst, 2007).

The findings of past studies indicate that there is a relationship between perception

of the police and socioeconomic status (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998; Brown & Benedict, 2002; Hagan, Shedd, & Payne, 2005; Avdija, 2010; Brunson & Weitzer, 2011). However, past research remains unable to offer the views of juveniles who are currently passing through the criminal justice system. The literature shows that the influencing factors are related to four main overlapping categories: demography and neighbourhood, prior police contact, vicarious experience and socialisation. However, in the fields of socialisation and demography, two important factors have not been taken into consideration very much. These are: (1) Personal observation of juveniles prior to contact with the police; and (2) Poverty with no or minimal education. Therefore, this current research sought to explore the role of the personal observation of juveniles and their socioeconomic status as these factors are assumed to have influenced their perception of the police either negatively or positively.

### **The Current Study**

With delinquency becoming a bigger problem in societies, research into this area, as highlighted above, has also been growing, focussing on the factors that help to shape or form juveniles' (out of the criminal justice system) perception of the police. However, these studies lack evidence of juveniles' prior personal observation of police activities in their surroundings. Their observation repeat stories they have heard from parents, relatives, friends and media reporting or representation. Most

of the evidence recorded in past research is based on interviews with youths who were not in contact with the law at the time of the interviews. Additionally, the juveniles' socioeconomic status was not given full weightage in these studies. Most importantly, the literature lacks facts on perception of the police by juveniles who are currently passing through the criminal justice system, particularly such evidence from developing countries like Pakistan. The current study, thus, attempted to study what juveniles have seen and observed about police activities in their communities, as well as the role of their economic status in forming their perception of the police, especially in the context of the police's vicarious treatment in the Pakistani city of Karachi. Therefore, this article is a first and brief attempt to highlight Pakistani juveniles' perception of the police.

## **MATERIAL, CONTEXT AND METHODS**

The findings of this study are based on detailed informal interviews conducted with 34 juveniles on probation with the Reclamation and Probation Department (RPD) of Sindh. Prior to interviewing the 34 juveniles, addresses and phone numbers of 30 former juvenile inmates were collected from the Youth Offenders Industrial School Karachi. It took many days to search for their whereabouts in extremely poor localities based on the given addresses in the megacity of Karachi. The researcher was

able to locate some of the addresses but the families had moved to other places. With no success in finding those children based on their addresses, the researcher sought help from the RPD.

The RPD helped to arrange interviews with 34 juvenile inmates, eight of whom were interviewed in the district Malir Court, in the office of a probation officer, while 26 juveniles were interviewed in the City Courts Karachi, in the office of a probation officer. At that time, according to the Assistant Director RPD, only 40 juveniles were under the custody of the RPD in Karachi City. Some of these boys had come to mark their monthly attendance in the probation officers' office but the majority were called in by the probation officers to meet with the researcher. It took the researcher about eight days to meet them at different times, with each interview taking a minimum of one hour; however, some interviews took longer than two hours to talk about different aspects of the youths' life in the police station. This article focusses only on the treatment they received from the police and their perception of the police, as well as the factors that shaped their perception of the police, lock-up cells, courts and prisons. The researcher manually jotted down the young boys' answers about their sufferings in the criminal justice system of Pakistan on a writing pad using a pen. In the analysis, each boy (interviewee) was given a case number from 1 to 34 in the same sequence they were interviewed.

## RESULTS

### Ages and Families' Source of Livelihoods

Table 1  
*Juveniles' families' sources of livelihoods*

No of juveniles	Source of livelihood of their fathers
15	Daily wage labourers
2	Rickshaw (a three-wheel small vehicle) drivers
1	Peon
2	Fishermen
1	Business – Recycling of garbage
2	Mechanics at motor workshops
1	Overlock operator in a garment factory
1	Plumber
1	Waiter at a restaurant
2	Workers at a welding workshop
2	Tailor masters, working at two different shops
4	Orphans who lived with their mothers and relatives; two of them used to collect garbage and sleep on the streets

Five of the interviewees were aged between 13 and 15 years, while the other 29 boys were between 16 and 18 years. Except for four of them, all the others stated that their fathers were the main bread earner of the family, but the men did extremely low paying work and belonged to the poor working class. Fifteen of the boys shared that their fathers were daily wage labourers in Karachi, two were rickshaw (a three-wheel small vehicle) drivers, one was a peon, two were fishermen, one had a small-scale business recycling garbage, two were mechanics at a motor workshop, one was an overlock operator in a

garment factory, one was a plumber, one was a waiter at a restaurant, two were workers at a welding workshop and two were tailor masters working at two different shops. Four of the boys were orphans who lived with their mothers and relatives, while the final two used to collect garbage and sleep on the streets.

### Charges

Most of the boys were charged on offences that were bailable in light of the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance's (JJSO), 2000, section 10, since all the offences carried a sentence of less than 10 years of imprisonment. Out of the 34, five of the boys had to be released immediately by the police as they were underage (below 15 years old); the JJSO provides immediate bail for children under 15 years of age.

### Falsely Implicated

Twelve boys stated that they had been involved in unlawful activities, while 22 claimed that they were not involved in any crime or unlawful act but had been falsely implicated by the police and other parties in crimes they had not committed. One of the boys shared that his fault was pillion riding but the police made out the case as assault on the police. Another boy said that he had committed no offence, and his only crime had been sitting with problematic juvenile offenders in the neighbourhood. He did not know if his friends had previously committed any offences; he had been charged with the crime even though his

friends had repeatedly informed the police officials that he was innocent.

### **The Only Language the Police Know Is That of Money and Torture**

Out of the 34 boys, four said that they had not been physically tortured by the police but they claimed that they had been harassed and mentally tortured, while the 30 other boys said that they had been physically and mentally tortured by the police. All the boys had been kept in police lock-ups with adults and 20 boys had been tortured severely. One of the young boys had even been tortured to the extent that he had been unable to stand and walk. Looking at his severe condition, the judge had not allowed his remand in police custody. All the boys stated that they had been handcuffed while in police custody, including when they were in front of the judge and had been dragged from the police station to the courtroom together with adults who had been accused.

One of the boys claimed, "The police did not physically torture me, but I saw many poor boys and men beaten by them for money" (Case 2). Another boy shared, "I was beaten most of the time at the police station" (Case 6). Another boy added that he had been physically tortured by police personnel through kicking, the use of fists, rolls and plastic pipes for beating and being turned upside down (Case 11). As a result of severe police torture, some of the boys had a negative view of the police. For instance, one boy disclosed that, "They only know to torture and kill" (Case 16), while another boy supported this view, stating that "They

know only two languages, money or torture" (Case 19). Another boy also shared view, which was also negative, "I did not know that they really beat humans like people used to beat animals. They treated us like dogs" (Case 17). A similar view was shared by another boy, who said that he had been beaten very badly and in one encounter, had been threatened with death (Case 28).

### **Juveniles' Personal Observation**

When these boys were asked how they had learnt even before their arrest that the police were bad, the majority claimed that their perception was based on personal observation of the negative activities of the police; however, only nine boys shared this personal observation of negative police activities. The first interviewee offered a general image of the police in Karachi. He said, "You ask everyone on the street about the police, they will say one thing, 'The police are bad'" (Case 1). According to a 16-year old interviewee who had spent seven days in the police lock-up, he was not the only one who knew it; everyone in Karachi knew that the police were bad. The police caught young boys without any reason and created problems for poor people. He said that the name 'police' had come to signify 'fear' because "Everyone knows that they beat a lot and no one can stop them. Before my arrest I knew about them because they had arrested my friends and people in my neighbourhood. They were beaten for no crime" (Case 30).

Another boy offered more or less the same view but offered specific information.



He shared that he knew bad things about the police because he had seen the police beating people on the roads. He further stated that the police always set up roadblocks. He stated, 'Whenever I walked by that road I felt a shiver in my body because of those policemen, no one told me the police are bad. I saw that most of the time they were doing bad things to people. They took peoples' money from their pockets; I saw them doing it at police pickets' (Case 7).

A young boy was arrested for keeping an illegal pistol and a stolen mobile. He confessed that he was involved in mobile snatching and that he had had a pistol with him at the time. Before he joined the company of bad boys, he had already known about the police as a corrupt gang of people who did not respect anyone. According to him, "People joined the police force to make money and lived a powerful life in their vicinities." He added, "In my neighbourhood most of the boys wanted to join the police force. I also wanted to join it because we wanted to make money and live a good life. I see some policemen in our neighbourhood leading a very good life and people are scared of them" (Case 3). This boy indicated that the police were perceived as corrupt, and he had personally witnessed some of their corrupt acts while observing them in his neighbourhood.

A 13-year-old boy claimed that he had been charged for theft and had spent four days in the police lock-up. He said, 'The police are not good. I was always afraid of them. I did not consider that the police could protect us but they would take away

everything from us." He added, "Before my arrest, many times I personally saw them looting people on the road. One day on our main road, which was a one-minute walking distance, the police tried to stop two young boys on a motorbike. However, they did not stop, so the police started firing at them causing them to be badly injured. These boys had no pistol or anything illegal with them" (Case 9).

Another boy shared his observation, "I was very young. I did not know who the police were. I saw people protesting on the main road for no water supply to their area and the police were beating them. I asked my father as I was curious about who those people were who were beating the protesters. My father told me the men were policemen' (Case 13). A 17-year-old boy shared that he and his friends were snatching mobile phones and that they were carrying pistols. They were arrested right after snatching a mobile phone. The police kept them only for two days in police lock-up at the Police Station in the Defence area, and they were tortured by only one policeman. He shared that he knew as a fact that 'police' meant power and money. Therefore, he wanted to join the police because it is easy to become rich by joining the police force. He shared, "I have seen a police constable in my neighbourhood. He was extremely poor but within three years he bought his own car and made a house. I always saw him with criminal people who used to sell narcotics" (Case 14).

Slightly different observations were shared by a 15-year-old boy who had spent

seven days in police lock-up although he had committed no crime. According to him, he already had knowledge of the police's bad behaviour towards people, mainly young people, and he had seen some of their negative activities being committed in his aunt's neighbourhood. He said, "Once I was visiting my aunt's house, I noticed noise on the ground floor. I went downstairs and noticed that a policeman had caught two young boys, and he was slapping and dragging them. These boys were in their college uniforms, they had just returned from the college. I heard the police were saying that they had stolen a motorbike" (Case 16). Another boy stated that at the time of his arrest, he was scared that he would also be treated in the same way like a boy in his neighbourhood, of whom he said, "He was beaten so badly that he was admitted in hospital for many days. The police did the same to me. I was beaten and threatened to be killed in an encounter, but I was not hospitalised" (Case 28).

### **Other Sources in Shaping Perception of the Police**

Nine participants also disclosed different mixed sources of information about the negative image of the police, mentioning multiple media sources that included private news channels (Geo and Express), dramas (they did not mention which dramas in particular), newspapers (mainly Urdu) and Indian films. Five boys mentioned family members and relatives as some of the sources of information and stories of the negative activities of police, and eight boys

said that they had heard negative stories about the police from their neighbours and friends, respectively.

### **Everyone knows that the Police are Bad**

Although it was the first time the interviewees had personal experience of police violence and abuse as victims, they declared that even before their arrest they very much knew about the negative image of the police. One of the boys shared that he already knew the police were a corrupt gang of people (Case 3). Another boy shared that before his arrest he knew that the police were dangerous (Case 10). Yet another claimed that "Everyone in the city [Karachi] knows about the negative role of police... if they become good, all bad people will be good" (Case 21). These statements implied that all who were arrested and then interviewed would be likely to say that the police were bad. Another boy said that he already knew before his arrest that the police were "Bad people and I was caught by bad people, and everyone knows that police are bad because they have power to arrest anyone, put him in lock-up, and send him to jail" (Case 23). Other boys had similar negative views about the police.

These incidents clearly indicated that the police's image in Karachi City was not good. The police were known in negative terms such as, "They are corrupt," "Servants of rich people," "They are criminals," "They do not respect anyone," "Police means problem started," "The police is the name of fear because they only beat and always threaten to kill."



### **Violence Reinforces Negative Image**

An additional finding of the research was that rampant violence had reinforced the negative image of the police. Knowledge acquired through different sources about the bad or negative image of the police accompanied by personal observation of police behaviour while in custody had reinforced the negative image of the police held by these 34 boys. Out of 34, 12 claimed that they were innocent; theoretically, a person whether innocent or not, if caught and tortured by the police, is justified in his view of the police being negative (Romain & Hassell, 2014; Flexon et al., 2009). The courts had yet to decide if these boys were innocent; however, all of them (except for four) claimed that they were physically tortured by the police and that they had seen many other poor people being tortured during their many days in custody at the police station. For obvious reasons, their negative view of the police would certainly grow stronger and be reaffirmed in their minds.

When they were asked to give their opinion about the police after they had been treated badly, all of them stated that it had become more negative. One of the boys said, "I will believe everyone in this city but I will never believe in the goodness of the police" (Case 17). Some of the boys related their stories with those of other people in Karachi City, such as, "You ask everyone on the street about the police, they will say the police are bad. I have experienced how badly the police treat poor people" (Case 1). A similar view was expressed by

another boy, who stated, "Everyone in the city [Karachi] knows about the negative role of the police".

### **Treatment of the Poor**

All of young interviewees belonged to the lower rungs of the socioeconomic class (Table 1) as their families were lowly paid. While mentioning their sufferings at the hands of the police due to class, one boy said, "I have experienced how bad the police treat poor people" (Case 1). Another interviewee suggested that poor boys are beaten for money, stating, "I saw many poor boys and men being beaten by them for money" (Case 2). Another boy said, "The police never cared about poor people" (Case 6).

Some boys directly mentioned the value of money and power, and that there was a lesser value for those who did not have money. One boy informed, "They catch, beat, insult and disrespect only poor people" (Case 7). Another boy said that "The police badly treat all poor people at the police station but do nothing to rich people because rich people gave them money and have power as they belonged to political parties" (Case 8). Another boy added that "The police do not arrest strong people or those who have political support; they would arrest only weak and helpless people" (Case 11). There were also other negative views in the same context. One juvenile said that "They do not listen to poor people. They just beat. If you give them money, they would not touch you" (Case 15). "They are servants of rich people" (Case 17). "They only arrest

innocent and poor people” (Case 18). “They are enemies of poor people” (case 20 and 22). “They block roads and arrest poor people” (Case 25). “They create problems for poor people” (Case 30). “For them, the poor are not humans” (Case 33).

The study found that in the view of the boys, there was a common practice of the criminalisation of the poor by the police. In many of the boys’ views (with reference to Cases 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 15, 18, 20, 22, 25, 30 and 33), the police caught poor people, while some of the boys (with reference to Cases, 8, 14, 17 and 24) said that the police did not catch rich people. The source of income of these boys’ families suggested that the boys belonged to extremely poor families (Table 1), which to some extent, justified their view that criminalisation of poor boys is a common practice in the city.

## DISCUSSION

The views of all 34 boys offered an immense account of the deplorable state of human rights of children (below 18 years of age) in police stations in Karachi. It also shows that implication in false cases and criminalisation of poor are interlinked and also deeply rooted in the criminal justice system of Pakistan, which is believed to serve the interests of people who are economically and politically strong. These factors need to be discussed from the perspective of Pakistani structural criminal violence. This would not be necessary if the 22 boys, out of the total of 34, were lying or claiming to be innocent (see more

details under heading ‘Falsely Implicated’). The 22 boys were, according to the facts as stated by them, innocent, and even if they were not, they deserved better treatment as outlined in the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance (JJSO) and the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child. Even the remaining 12 boys who confessed that they had committed offences ought not to have been treated inhumanely but according to provisions enshrined in the law. Since they had already been through the harsh criminal justice system of Pakistan, there was no reason to disbelieve them. The point is, however, why were these innocent boys falsely implicated? What happened to the boys is not merely acts of violence, torture and abuse at the hands of the police against 34 boys but the exploitation and victimisation of thousands of children whom they represented, in addition to the poor and the working class (Yale Law School, 2014; Khoso & Yew, 2015).

In South Asia, Pakistan is one of the countries where torture and abuse of children in police lock-ups, and also the use of harsh, abusive or obscene language is reported to be common (UNICEF, 2006). The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in its Concluding Observations revealed deep concerns about reports of torture and ill-treatment of children by police officers in detention facilities in Pakistan (United Nations, 2009). From 2011 to 2013, 224 police officials were reported by the media to be involved in child sexual abuse cases, 10 of which were reported to have occurred in policemen’s personal

residential quarters and 18 in police stations (Sahil, 2011, 2012, & 2013).

Why would the Pakistani police torture the detained? It was found that torture is considered an acceptable practice in Pakistani culture. "Pakistan is a country with high incidence of intra-family violence" (Mansoor, 2010). The state allows for the torturing of citizens through its criminal justice system, which in turn justifies torture within families. Consequently, Pakistani society has become more violent and intolerant, and this seems to be allowing a foothold for a rise in cases of honour killing (South Asians for Human Rights, 2011). Pakistani society is infested with extremism, intolerance and violent behaviour. As a routine matter, children across the country are battered, beaten, hit, slapped and spanked by their guardians and teachers. In 2011, a media channel showed the police officials in one of the cities in Pakistan flogging a 16-year-old boy in public on charges of stealing a mobile phone. A senior police officer commented that this kind of open punishment creates "fear of the police among the public, and believe me, 80% of the crime is controlled in this way" (Khoso, 2011).

Many police officials of low rank use the criminalisation of the poor and helpless as a show of good performance to impress their bosses. Since the police remain unable to access, identify and catch actual offenders, they implicate disadvantaged children in crimes committed by others (Khoso & Yew, 2015) to avoid pressure from their superiors. In addition, in the

rural and urban areas of Pakistan, the police work to serve the interests of the feudal and capitalist elite. The elite have a strong influence on the police and what goes on in police stations, commonly known as *thana*, meaning police station. *Thana* culture in Pakistan has come to refer to how the poor seem to be implicated by the police in false cases (Ali, 2015).

*Thana* culture has given authority and power to the police to illegally detain the innocent and the poor without having to give any reasons or on false grounds. *Thana* culture (or culture of torture or violence) is essentially a product of colonial law, stemming from the Police Act of 1861. After independence in 1947 from the British colonisers, Pakistan adopted and continued the Police Act 1861, allowing the harsh treatment of criminals that was framed and regulated under colonial law to continue and not be superseded by child protection law such as the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance (JJSO). In the Police Act, the police served as the enforcement arm of state bureaucracy, controlling people through 'repression and fear'. Perito and Parvez (2014) believed that "*Thana* culture *primarily* serves the interests of the political elite, the wealthy, and those who demand special treatment." They also added that the majority of Pakistanis "fear the police and seek their assistance as a last resort. Widespread corruption, high-handedness and abusive behaviour have soared in police-community relations" (Perito & Parvez, 2014). Abbas (2011) believed that in the eyes of the public, Pakistan's police are

corrupt, incompetent and brutal; therefore, “justice is elusive, insecurity is rampant, and ordinary citizens are the victims of this system. Even internal police assessments acknowledge the police force’s lack of credibility in the public eye”.

It would appear that, based on the above discussion, the views and perception of these 34 boys affirm the pre-established violent and negative image of the police in Karachi, perhaps even in the whole of Pakistan. All 34 boys categorically stated that they already knew that the police were bad, and after their interaction with the police, their negative views of the police were reinforced. “The police are bad,” was a common evaluation of the police among the interviewees.

The police played a major role in constructing the negative perception of themselves that is now generally portrayed by the media and society (family members, relatives, friends, neighbours); this seemed to be confirmed by the interviewees, who had been the unfortunate victims of police brutality. The interviewees’ personal encounter with the police, including their being falsely implicated in criminal acts and the physical and mental torture they were subjected to reinforced their negative perception/image of the police. Therefore, the point is not that juveniles or children have a negative perception of the police after a bad personal encounter with the police (Romain & Hassell, 2014; Stewart, Morris, & Weir, 2014; Brick et al., 2009; Dowler & Zawilski, 2007) but that society as a whole contributes to the construction of such an

image of an institution that is meant to be responsible and which was established to protect citizens, both adults and children. The interviewees had heard, watched, seen and observed instances that portrayed the police in a negative light, but their views and perception became stronger, or were reinforced, after their personal experience of being tortured, degraded and treated inhumanely (Norman, 2009).

The interviewees’ perception of the police was formed along extremely negative terms by the media and their parents, friends and neighbours, but their personal observation of the police was a strong influencing factor in shaping their views and perception of the police. The statements they made in the interviews suggested that their negative views about the police have become firmly imprinted on their minds forever.

The police were themselves responsible for the construction of this negative image in the perception of the interviewees. In terms of observation, one route of construction of such a negative perception of the police was the police’s own behaviour of indulging in acts such as blocking roads, taking money and taking bribes, all of which were mentioned by the juveniles in their personal observation. At the same time, the media and socialisation also contributed to the formation of this negative perception. However, it is not clear whether the media or socialisation reaffirmed the juveniles’ personal observation about the police’s negative activities. This research was also not able to discover which factors were the

first to influence the juveniles' perception of the police i.e. whether their personal observation first influenced their perception of the police or information shared by family members, friends, relatives and the media as part of their socialisation was the first. This area requires further investigation. However, as far as the police's vicarious behaviour is concerned, this study revealed that the negative treatment of the juveniles in custody at police stations strengthened their negative perception of the police.

## CONCLUSION

This study found several strong as well as weak factors that influenced juveniles' perception of the police. Parents, relatives, friends and the media were somehow meagre factors; personal observation was the most important factor in socialising juveniles' perception of the police. Besides low socioeconomic status, criminalisation of the poor was also a leading factor. The strongest factor was violence committed by the police; police violence reinforced the negative perception of the police.

Though the scale of this study was small, the research revealed that negative perception of the police among juveniles was formed from input received from many sources. Therefore, it appears that juveniles' perception of police should be contextual and related to specific environments and the relationship between the two variables (such as the police and poor juveniles or the police and rich juveniles).

This study urges deeper investigation into the way children and juveniles think

and perceive the police, who are gatekeepers of the criminal justice system in developing countries like Pakistan. The findings of this study will enlighten policy-makers and administrators on how the criminal justice system can protect the human rights of children in police custody. In order to protect children from violence and abuse in the criminal justice system, merely passing laws is insufficient, and rigorous institutional efforts are required to change the attitude of policemen towards children.

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